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WASHINGTON LETTER.

THE department of agriculture is showing a renewed interest in the sorghum and sugar industries of the country. Professor Wiley, the chemist of the department, has sailed for Europe, where he will spend as much time as is necessary in the investigation of the present condition of these industries in various countries, and a study of the latest improvements in machinery and methods. The results likely to arise out of Professor Wiley's visit will doubtless be of considerable importance as enabling the department to contribute to the success of the experiments that are being made in the United States.

Much interest is just now exhibited in scientific circles in experimental seismology. The rooms of the Philosophical society were crowded at its last meeting, the principal topic being the discussion of the observations made at the time of the Flood Rock explosion. Although perplexing, and to some extent inconsistent, the results promise to be of considerable value. Captain Dutton, in whose hands this subject is placed by the director of the geological survey, proposes to take advantage of dynamite explosions, which are frequently occurring in the excavation of a tunnel near the city, to continue the investigation of the question of the velocity of transmission of the disturbance, and it is earnestly desired that he may be allowed all needed facilities.

It is reported that Baba Gopal Vinayak Joshee, a Brahman pundit, and fellow of the Theosophical society of Bombay, is the guest of Dr. Elliott Coues of this city. An enterprising reporter for one of the city papers has interviewed both the distinguished theosophist and his host, no less distinguished in that line, and, if they are correctly reported, has been made the medium for the transmission of information of the most vital importance to an expectant and anxious public.

All the 'working processes' of this wonderful philosophy were concealed from the newspaper man, however, and for two reasons, which, in his calmer moments, he cannot but regard as somewhat personal. One was that "this knowledge in the hands of bad men would be a terrible thing;" the other, that "a mind not yet cultivated to follow out this high train of thought might be driven insane by it."

A good deal was said about 'astral visits' and that sort of thing, and experiments and results were recounted, in comparison with which the work of the Society for psychical research, with its cards and its guessed numbers, appears absolutely childish; in fact, it must be relegated to the stone age.

Preparations are being made for the meeting of the American public health association, to be held in this city early in next month (Dec. 8-11). A strong local committee has been appointed, including, among others, several leading physicians of the army and navy. The meeting is likely to bring together a large number of the leading sanitarians of the country. The association is but little more than ten years old, but it is one of the most active and influential in the world. Z.

Washington, D.C., Nov. 16.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

**.* Correspondents are requested to be as brief as possible. The writer's name is in all cases required as proof of good faith.*

The swindling geologist.

PROFESSOR SALISBURY's letter in *Science* for Nov. 6 gives the present location of a miscreant who has been plundering cabinets and libraries throughout the country for the last two or three years, and who has been making decent people even more unhappy by assuming their names than by stealing their books. His present address is County Jail, Elkhorn, Wis. *Esto perpetua*. This is the address; but as to the name, who knows? For the last six months he has dragged through the mire the honored name of Leo Lesquereux, to the great annoyance of the venerable owner. Before this he was Prof. F. A. Arendel of the Pennsylvania survey. Other names under which he has stolen and swindled are N. U. Taggart, E. Douglass, E. D. Whitney, E. D. Strong, etc. Three of these names have the initials E. D., in which fact there may be some significance.

The Milwaukee police record says of him that he has but one hand, wearing a false hand on one arm. This fact may help to identify him. He seems to have a remarkable amount of geological knowledge, and especially on fossil botany. Where did he get this knowledge? Who trained him? Who was his father? Who was his mother? Has he a sister? Has he a brother?

These are questions that many victims desire to have answered, in whole or in part. E. O.

Columbus, O., Nov. 9.

Effigy mounds in Iowa.

Near the village of North McGregor, Clayton county, Iowa, on the south-western quarter of section 3, T. 95, R. 3 W., is situated probably the largest group of 'effigy' or imitative mounds west of the Mississippi. These earthworks are built on a dividing ridge, and are elevated about 500 feet above the river. The surrounding country is broken and rugged, the bluff on the east side along the Mississippi River being perpendicular in many places. To the north-west lies Yellow River, and on the south-west Bloody Run. This remarkably fine group was surveyed by me on the 25th and 26th of May, 1885; and a few details, illustrated by a topographical plan, may perhaps be acceptable to those readers of *Science* who are interested in North American antiquities.

These mounds number fifteen in all, consisting of two long embankments, ten animals, and three birds, and they occupy a *terre-plein* of just about 2,000 feet in length. The first embankment is 190 feet long, 18